

IN THE CLAIMS:

Kindly amend claims 1, 2 and 6-9 and add new claims 14-17 as shown in the following listing of claims, which replaces all previous versions and listings of claims:

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1. (currently amended) A vegetation cutting machine comprising: a pipe-shaped operation rod; a motor mounted to a proximal end of the operation rod; a drive shaft extending through the operation rod and driven by the motor; a cutting tool provided at a distal end of the operation rod to undergo rotation with the drive shaft; a handle comprised of a bar mounted at a fixing point to the operation rod between the motor and the cutting tool; and right and left handgrips provided on ~~mounted to~~ distal ends of the bar, each of the handgrips having a single mounting portion that is in direct contact with the bar at a point located substantially at ~~being mounted at or proximate to~~ a center of gravity of a sum of a mass of the respective handgrip and a mass of a portion of the bar extending between the fixing point and a respective one of the distal ends of the bar, such that the mounting portions of the respective handgrips are located at positions of the bar at which vibrations transmitted to the bar from the motor through the operation rod are minimized.

2. (currently amended) A vegetation cutting machine according to claim 1; wherein the handgrips each further have ~~a mounting portion that is in contact with the bar and~~ escape portions that are not in contact with the bar to reduce vibration transmitted from the bar to the handgrip.

3. (previously presented) A vegetation cutting apparatus according to claim 1; wherein the motor is a gas-powered engine.

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4. (previously presented) A vegetation cutting apparatus according to claim 1; wherein the motor is an electric motor.

5. (previously presented) A vegetation cutting apparatus according to claim 1; further comprising a throttle control lever mounted to one of the handgrips for controlling a rotating speed of the motor.

6. (currently amended) A vegetation cutting apparatus according to claim 1; wherein each of the handgrips comprises an elongated hollow body composed of two grip halves connected together, a respective one of the distal end portions of the bar being held between the grip halves, the grip halves having inner peripheral surface portions forming the mounting ~~mount~~ portion of the handgrip that is ~~and~~ held

in direct contact with an outer circumferential surface of the bar substantially at the center of gravity.

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7. (currently amended) A vegetation cutting apparatus according to claim 6; wherein ~~the portion of~~ each handgrip has escape portions that are not in contact with the bar, the escape portions having ~~has~~ a plurality of annular ribs projecting from inner peripheral surfaces of the grip halves and spaced from one another in a longitudinal direction of the elongated body of the handgrip, the annular ribs having distal ends spaced from the outer circumferential surface of the bar by gaps forming the escape portions of the handgrip.

8. (currently amended) A vegetation cutting apparatus comprising: an elongated rod; a motor mounted to a proximal end of the elongated rod; a drive shaft extending through the elongated rod and driven by the motor; a cutting tool provided at a distal end of the elongated rod to undergo rotation with the drive shaft; a handle assembly having a bar fixedly mounted to the elongated rod at a fixing point between the motor and the cutting tool and right and left handgrips provided on ~~mounted to~~ distal end portions of the bar, each handgrip having a single mounting portion that is in direct contact with the bar at a point located substantially at ~~being mounted at or proximate to~~ a center of gravity of a sum of a

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mass of the respective handgrip and a mass of a portion of the bar extending between the fixing point and the distal end of the respective bar, such that the mounting portions of the respective handgrips are located at positions of the bar at which vibrations transmitted to the bar from the motor through the operation rod are minimized, and ~~each handgrip having a single mount portion directly connected to a respective one of the distal end portions of the bar and located at the center of gravity of the sum of the mass of the handgrip and a portion of the bar extending from the fixing point to the respective distal end of the bar, and a plurality of escape portions formed in a remaining portion of the handgrip so as to keep the remaining portion out of contact with the bar to suppress transmission of vibration from the bar to the handgrip.~~

9. (currently amended) A vegetation cutting apparatus according to claim 8; wherein each of the handgrips comprises an elongated hollow body composed of two grip halves connected together, a respective one of the distal end portions of the bar being held between the grip halves, the grip halves having inner peripheral surface portions forming the mounting mount portion of the handgrip that is and held in direct contact with an outer circumferential surface of the bar substantially at the center of gravity.

10. (previously presented) A vegetation cutting apparatus according to claim 9; wherein the remaining portion of the handgrip has a plurality of annular ribs projecting from inner peripheral surfaces of the grip halves and spaced from one another in a longitudinal direction of the elongated body of the handgrip, the annular ribs having distal ends spaced from the outer circumferential surface of the bar by gaps forming the escape portions of the handgrip.

11. (previously presented) A vegetation cutting apparatus according to claim 8; wherein the motor is a gas-powered engine.

12. (previously presented) A vegetation cutting apparatus according to claim 8; wherein the motor is an electric motor.

13. (previously presented) A vegetation cutting apparatus according to claim 8; further comprising a throttle control lever mounted to one of the handgrips.

14. (new) A vegetation cutting machine comprising: a pipe-shaped operation rod; a motor mounted to a proximal end of the operation rod; a drive shaft extending through the operation rod and driven by the motor; a cutting tool provided at a distal end of the operation rod to undergo rotation with

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the drive shaft; a handle comprised of a bar mounted at a fixing point to the operation rod between the motor and the cutting tool; and right and left handgrips provided on distal ends of the bar, each of the handgrips comprising a single mounting portion in direct contact with the bar at a point located substantially at a center of gravity of a sum of a mass of the respective handgrip and a mass of a portion of the bar extending between the fixing point and a respective one of the distal ends of the bar, and a plurality of escape portions that are not in contact with the bar to reduce vibration transmitted from the bar to the handgrip, each of the handgrips comprising an elongated hollow body in which a respective one of the distal end portions of the bar is received, the elongated hollow body having an inner circumferential surface facing an outer circumferential surface of the bar, the inner circumferential surface having a first portion held in contact with the outer circumferential surface of a part of the respective distal end portion of the bar and forming the mounting portion of the handgrip and a second portion extending contiguously from the first portion in a longitudinal direction of the elongated hollow body and being out of contact with the circumferential surface of a remaining part of the distal end portion of the bar, the second portion of the inner circumferential surface having a

plurality of annular ribs projecting from the inner circumferential surface of the handgrip and spaced from one another in the longitudinal direction of the hollow body, the annular ribs having distal ends spaced from the outer circumferential surface of the distal end portion of the bar and forming the escape portions of the handgrip.

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15. (new) A vegetation cutting apparatus according to claim 14; wherein the motor is a gas-powered engine.

16. (new) A vegetation cutting apparatus according to claim 14; wherein the motor is an electric motor.

17. (new) A vegetation cutting apparatus according to claim 14; further comprising a throttle control lever mounted to one of the handgrips for controlling a rotating speed of the motor.